

and thus the Sibylline Oracles and other classical oracles were included in those eschatological speculations.

The main sign for many was the preaching of the gospel by Luther, seen as a fulfillment of Jesus' promise that the gospel would be preached and then the end would come. Likewise the flourishing of so many heresies, such as Calvinism, Anabaptism, and Antitrinitarianism, was interpreted as the fulfillment of the announcement of the coming of many false prophets. One is struck by the way eschatology fostered the study of history, natural science, and even mathematics.

The approach of the Thirty Years War with its election of a Calvinist to the throne of Bohemia and the renewed belligerence of Catholicism increased the excitement. The field became a true Babel of confusion, and there arose a polarization between the eschatologists and the exponents of the new Protestant scholasticism, who branded eschatological speculation as spiritual pride or ignorance, an accusation made credible by the total failure of the many efforts to identify events of the war with prophetic announcements. Thus the eschatological ferment came to an end. A personal quest for piety replaced in Pietism the hope of a collective divine transformation of all things.

Because of the mass of information it contains, the book requires careful reading, especially due to the fact that the author has chosen a thematic approach which, at times, makes the chronological framework difficult to follow. But the reading of this book is a must for anyone who is interested in the history of eschatology or Lutheran theology.

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Brecht, Martin. *Martin Luther. Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521-1532*. Trans. James L. Schaaf. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990. xvi + 543 pp. \$39.95.

This volume is the second of three in the extended biography of Luther by Martin Brecht, Professor of Reformation and Modern Church History, Evangelical Theological Faculty, University of Münster, Westphalia, Germany. The first volume, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483-1521*, was well received by scholars, as this one will be. Brecht covers here the middle period of Luther's life, essentially the same period as that covered by Heinrich Bornkamm's 1979 study, *Luther in Mid-Career 1521-1530* (trans. E. Theodore Bachmann. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983). The main justification for a volume so soon on the same subject and time period is simply that this will be a part of a comprehensive overview of the whole Luther. In this regard, Brecht's work is welcome. This time period in Luther's story is too often neglected in

detail. It is important because during this time Luther himself was struggling with the routinization of his Reformation insights.

Brecht begins with Luther at Wartburg and then turns to the struggle for order at Wittenberg (1522-24). His study is not merely a chronicle of Lutheran reforming efforts, which would be an impossible task. Rather, Brecht covers major topics of the reform, themselves spread over the chronological period under scrutiny. Luther's lengthy encounters with the radicals—a term Brecht himself will not use—as well as the efforts to address marriage, home, and family in the course of his ministry, reveal a Luther whose reform is indeed to be understood as comprehensive, with major implications for the whole of life and society. Luther the theologian in debate with Erasmus, and Luther the academician and pastor are both described. The conflicts over the Lord's Supper and baptism receive attention. Major attention is given to the matter of politics in the Reformation, and a review of the matrix of events surrounding the Augsburg Diet and Confession emerges. The events after Augsburg, omitted from Bornkamm's study, are analyzed. An inquiry into home, community, family, and theology from 1530-32 concludes the book. This later portion of the study is particularly welcome, for it is not readily available in existing English works. The third volume, which is already in process of translation, will cover the final fourteen years of Luther's life.

The author is clearly one of today's leading interpreters of Luther. He brings masterful skills to the task. His research is grounded in the sources; for this reason alone the volume will be of use to scholars and serious students of Luther.

An uncommon strength of the volume is the attention to details in the life and work of Luther that are often unnoted. Such is the impact Luther's ill health made on his work. Many other personal details of Luther's daily living are also noted, all of which allow him to emerge as a real human being. If there is a weakness in the work, it is closely allied to its strength, namely, that Brecht summarizes carefully the writings of Luther on the subjects under consideration, but thereby limits his analysis and critique. This particular style sometimes leaves the reader incapable of distinguishing when Brecht is speaking and when Luther. The summaries of Luther's perspective are so fluent that the reader will need to exercise some caution in order to distinguish between the Lutheran perspective and other possibilities. Although the author does not completely accept Luther uncritically, he does tend to underplay the significance of Luther's supporters and opponents.

I understand why the German Lutheran Brecht, located in Münster, finds it difficult to accept the commonly used terms of "radicals" and "left-wing" when referring to Müntzer, Karlstadt, the Anabaptists, and others. It is, however, unfortunate that he utilizes the Lutheran epithets "enthusiasts, iconoclasts and fanatics" so willingly. Brecht attempts to be

somewhat critical of Luther's role in the Peasants' War, but he underestimates how much he was viewed as rejecting the common person while too easily agreeing with the princes. I find the treatment of the Zwinglian position, and especially the reasons for Zwingli's disagreement with Luther, to be less than satisfactory.

The translation is splendid and only occasionally slips into German language structure. James Schaaf also cites the English translations of Luther whenever possible. It is unfortunate that he omitted readily available translations of Zwingli's writings. Scholars owe a debt of gratitude to Schaaf for making this work available in English. The third volume will be a welcome conclusion to a valuable set on this most important of Protestant Reformers.

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Carden, Allen. *Puritan Christianity in America: Religion and Life in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990. ix + 237 pp. \$16.95.

Most people, in every society and in every period of history, expect religion to be relevant for morality and life. Indeed this was particularly the case in 17th-century America. American Puritanism provided a system of ultimate meaning and interpretation that could hardly avoid being linked to spiritual experiences and prescriptions of ethical conduct. Morality, theology, and ethics provided the framework by means of which American Christianity gave finite expression to its system of ultimate meaning. Through this framework and the quality of commitment to their particular form of Christianity, the Puritans hoped that their faith or system of alternate meaning would become more visible and therefore more accessible to others and certainly more enduring.

Puritan Christianity in America claims: "Although the Puritans have been the focus of hundreds of journal articles and monographs within the past century, historians have often minimized or misunderstood the spiritual dimension of the Puritan experience. Most recent studies have betrayed a limited perspective, dealing with a particular town, individual, family, or issue. It is hoped that this volume will provide a concise, yet thorough synthesis of the Puritan's own ideas and recent scholarship in order to provide the reader with an overall perspective encompassing the multifaceted experiences of Puritan Christianity in America" (12). The subject matter of the book is precisely a history of the interpretation of the religious experience of the Puritans, embodied in their notions of the "Holy Commonwealth" and "God's errand in the wilderness."